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THE WELL BY THE GATE

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BY
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Pres. M. Woolsey Stryker, D.D., LL.D.

The Presbyterian Pulpit

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BY THE

REV. M. WOOLSEY STRYKER, D.D., LL.D.

PRESIDENT HAMILTON COLLEGE

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I

THE WELL BY THE GATE

THE WELL BY THE GATE

I

THE WELL BY THE GATE

"Oh that one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!"—2 SAM. xxiii. 15.

IT is the cry of a homesick heart. It is an episode from one of the ruggedest and most educative parts of the life of David,—shepherd and soldier, singer and king.

David was at Adullam, in the region of Tekoa, a little southeast of Bethlehem. He was a warrior now, wonted to rough fare and to all the privations of outlawry: through the enmity of the king whom he had been appointed to succeed, an adventurer, and, though almost within sight of his birthplace, an alien.

There are vital thrusts against which no harness of war is proof, and one day there came upon David there a consuming desire for a taste of that water which was at the gate-side of the little town, so few miles away, where once had been his home.

Easily we read enough between the lines of the incident to comprehend that the thirst was not so much in this man's throat as in his heart. Amid these deeds of arms his spirit was wounded and parched. A glimpse, a recollection, and then a sharp longing not to be stifled—"water!"

Just behind those hills lay the scene of his boyhood. The whole landscape rushed upon his memory,—the kindly old olive trees, the winding familiar paths between, the bleating flocks, the kine lowing in the afternoon. His soul gave a great lurch toward it all, and his lips burned for one more swallow, with his hand for a cup, of that cooling spring. Overpoweringly he remembered the days when his now bronzed face was ruddy, the evenings when he piped the sheep to their fold, that night when he strode home shouldering on the one side that hurt but rescued lamb and on the other the skins of the lion and the bear,—all that dear domestic horizon, with its rural duties and its untroubled faith. Now, captain-at-arms though he was, the rushing associations forced from him the exceeding cry: "Oh that one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!"

Who does not know, or at least who will not know, the wistful yearning, that when it comes,

comes so full and passionate for the old width and imagination, the plain joys and complete satisfactions of childhood? In what relief and reality does memory's spectroscope set the simplest things of youth! How it cleanses the palimpsest of the years to get back the holiest text so overwritten with lesser thoughts!

The lore of the household, of which our store is so precious, abounds in these tender revertings for the cot and the cottage. "The old oaken bucket"; "Rock me to sleep, mother"; "Home, sweet home"—these and such as these, of whose echoes our folk-song is full, are the anthology of the heart. Well does Burns say of the lyrics of the fireside, "Compared with these, Italian trills are tame." A literature with no psalms and no cradle-songs were poor indeed, and the life that does not cherish these is a harp untuned.

> "There are gains for all our losses,
> There is balm for all our pain:
> But when youth, the dream, departs,
> It takes something from our hearts
> That can never come again."

A while ago I passed carwise through a hamlet of Pennsylvania, near where the upper Susquehanna wanders toward the sea, and where once I lived, a boy of twelve: but how strangely the

hills, the stream, the street, had dwindled and shrunk together! Size is relative to that central affection which magnifies all its store of surroundings. That which is about has its perspective, not in fact but in love's wiser fancy. We cannot restore the outer ratio of what made life's earliest impressions. A secret and vanished beauty fails of reattachment to visible things. The lute is hushed, the chairs are vacant, and Charles Lamb's plaint springs to pallid lips:—

> "Ghost-like I paced round the haunts of my childhood,
> Earth seemed a desert I was bound to traverse,
> Seeking to find the old familiar faces."

The well is shallower. The waters that "were wont to go warbling so softly and well" do not flow as they used to flow. Their gush and sparkle have escaped and something tepid and tasteless has come. The sweetness was about, not in, the draught. The taste was in the tongue and the lips that have changed.

David wanted, not what he thought he wanted and asked for so importunately, but his childhood. It was that which haunted his faint and dusty heart. The three brave companions could not fetch it. The fountain of a past youth could not be forced at the sword's point, nor the cup of

a life irrevocably departed become the trophy of war. And so when they came from their loyal and daring quest, David poured out what they brought him as a libation, nor would he take for himself what had been their jeopardy. He wanted it no more, or rather, knew that what he wanted with it was other and impossible.

Suffer, then, a word upon all this to you who sometimes, even if not yet old, turn with thirsty eyes toward an earlier time, and who make your own the substance of this lonely cry. Perhaps the parching years have made your lips and throats to ache with want,—sailors adrift upon brackish floods that offer "never a drop to drink." You who would give all you have for that boyish simplicity with which you knelt at a crib-side and kissed a pure good night upon lips whose earthly benediction has been so long time mute,—look! Listen, as that little lad yonder with his small treble prattles the twilight prayer—"Now I lay me down to sleep." It is yourself.

You have read that sweet sketch of Holmes, ending with "Two tickets for Boston," and then with the long deep sigh—"No, one ticket for Boston."

> "Oh for a man to arise in me
> That the man that I am may cease to be!"

Oh, God, for an hour of yesterday, for but one taste of that old innocence, for that blessedest tether of "a mother's apron-strings"—oh, for "the well which is by the gate"!

But the real gate and the path to it are still accessible, and to every way-weary soul, like good news from a far country, there is offered a cup of cold water and a childhood reattained. O disciple of regret and longing, it is from Him who can transform this transient valley of Baca! It is from "that spiritual Rock that followed them." It is clean and cool from more than artesian depths. It is freely bestowed of Him who ventured, who gave, His life to fetch it for you. Refuse it you may not; for He alone had such a right of jeopardy on your behalf. It is drawn from the wells of salvation, clear as crystal. Take it to your lips and heart, "a fountain of gardens, . . . and streams from Lebanon." He who for you said, "I thirst," who thirsts for you, declared, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst"—never again unavailingly!

Know where these waters run. Forget them not. For you may clear a large place for yourself, or come to a cave: but it will crowd you some day, the intense desire, the need, the memory.

God grant you then the song: "Spring up, O well! Sing ye unto it!"

It is no mirage, and this Old Testament story is an idyl and message of its truth. Press that day,—press now,—to the gates of Bethlehem,—a man's heart in a child's home. It is the "house of bread," city of Ruth, of Ruth's great-grandson, of Mary, of the Babe, and the shepherds of the temple of flocks, and the wise men. To him who cries, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God," the antiphon answers, that clasps in merciful assurance every homing spirit, "Neither shall they thirst any more; for the Lamb shall lead them."

Comrades all, not just as David's servitors, but at trial, cost and danger, let us be those who can bring the solace of a renewing God to them that are ready to perish. To carry to one of the least of these the cup of healing is a soldier's task and a saint's. Freely you have received, freely give.

For the streams for which the spirit cries are not from any of the hills of time, and that which of all things our bodies need most and need most constantly—water—is a parable.

II

THE CARPENTER'S SON

II

THE CARPENTER'S SON

"Is not this the carpenter's son?"—MATT. xiii. 55.

A MOTHER telling me of a dear child whom God had taken the short way to heaven, of his face and form, his winsomeness, exclaimed at last: "Oh, if I had a picture of him to show you!" and I said: "I do not need it; your story is more than any mere likeness." Love is the best camera and the heart the truest sensitive plate—there is no other photography like that. It is surer than the light itself.

We have no authentic pictorial proof of what Christ's face was like. But we need none. The loving and living story is more real than protraiture. Here, as in a mirror, we behold the glory of His gentleness and grandeur. And we know Him, too, by their inspired faces who have, soul to soul, begun to wear His image. No intaglio could be more definite. Certainly those who resemble Him here will recognize Him yonder. They shall see His face, be like Him, and know

as they are known. God's providence must, by some unexplained wisdom, have refrained from preserving any detailed record of that childhood and youth. The clumsy apocryphal attempts neither have the sanction of tradition nor do they give anything that fits His mature personality as reflected in the gospels. We are left to read between the so few written lines and to imagine by His public ministry what He was in those days concerning which our affectionate curiosity is not gratified—those "other things" of which the earliest were hidden safe in Mary's heart.

His generation all unconscious of what it contained, persecutors and disciples yet in their cradles, the Wonderful One grew on. A babe, a lad, a youth, a man—He served out that apprenticeship of task and trial by which His heavenly Father prepared Him for the stupendous burden, the exceeding sorrow, the absolute victory. Without leaving the warrant of what is given we can surely assert something, and reverently infer somewhat more, concerning the expansion of that white soul. Remember all the time that God gave that young life exactly the best environment for His growth in wisdom. He trained the Son of man amid simple things and first principles. He brought Him to the closest terms with the average life.

He familiarized Him with the daily problems of plain men. No, the throne does not make the prince. Verily, it is true, "God hath often a great share in a little house"—a little stairway, a little room, a little lattice, a little closet. Imagination itself steps softly and whispers, "It was here."

At Nazareth. In beautiful Galilee, on the southern ridge of Lebanon. The hills rose sharply and high, cut by the rain grooves. There were views—snow-silvered Hermon to the north, to the west Carmel and the Mediterranean blue; Tabor, six miles southeast, and beyond Gilead and Gilboa. The Sea of Galilee eighteen miles to the east. Less than a Sabbath day's journey would take Him to nobler prospects than that temple turret gave. How well He must have studied all that landscape! It seems to have been a rough village. A pretty place may be a very wicked place; but the worst can be a good discipline. This was Christ's school, but His presence did not make it hospitable. There He preached first. Twice they flouted Him and once attempted His life. Their unbelief shut the door. Would He anger none now?

It was a dutiful boyhood. He was "subject to his parents." In that plain household He learned about moth and rust and the much-

patched garment. He found room there to keep the two great commandments. He was a good son, "learning obedience" and "in all things like unto His brethren." He had good training; for Joseph was a just man, and His mother was—Mary. He searched the Scriptures and remembered them—their broad spiritual wealth was His. There He found the solaces of the interior life, and learned that life is not by bread alone. He found quiet shelters for meditation (alas! so little our practice). The solitude was populous and prayer as natural as love. He was near to all the vital breaths of the open country and to those overtones of joy and peace—God's obligato—which are always sounding when a pure heart listens. With what fine untarnished senses He appreciated the physical world, with what an ear to hear He caught its meaning! So in the cool of that day whose heat and travail was to be so terrible, He grew in stature—("He hammered through").

Who will learn, may. God's best schools are not always those most brilliantly endowed. The foot of Mount Tabor was better than the feet of Gamaliel. Tarsus was yet to be tutored by Nazareth. Here was no dreamer theorizing about the masses. He was one of the mass. He earned

His living. Once our text was a sneer, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" Mark leaves off the last word. Either is true to the fact. They taunted Him with being a common man. He had a trade (as all Hebrew boys had, usually their father's), and He supported Himself by it. The Prince of the house of David, the Messiah, was a mechanic—a house-builder. They all knew Him in Nazareth—by sight, they thought they knew Him—their estimates were as self-satisfied and superficial as all of ours are apt to be of those who work for us. But He was no recluse. The boys and neighbors saw Him daily. Many had His work in their houses. Perhaps some who went to cast Him down over that hill lived in houses He had built. It is so yet.

No doubt the bench could long be pointed out where He wrought—the quaint Oriental tools; be sure none others ever did such honest work. He wanted no wages that He did not earn. What would you not give for a chisel, a shaving, from that shed? But wherever modest, earnest work is done, there is a truer souvenir of Christ than any relic could be. Would you not like to live in a house He had built? But you can engage Him to build your dwelling if you choose. Indeed, except the Lord build your house, they

labor in vain that build it—it never will be a home. He built this house. This is, indeed, the Builder! Not clothed in soft raiment. The hand that was pierced for our sins was browned and roughened by day labor. He who made the earth and founded it, set up its pillars and laid the beams of His chambers, without whom was not anything made that hath been made, has, Himself the foundation, reared that in this earth which no floods shall wrench asunder nor torrents undermine. Divine Lord! Thou whom the builders rejected, Thou glorious architect and artisan in one, build us into that temple, which out of the quarry of the ages rises toward the day of the topstone and the shouting.

Many of the instances which pointed His teachings came out of our Lord's experience as a craftsman,—the man who did not count the cost, the man who built on the sand. In that frugal home He knew the pathos of daily economy, work to do not only, but to find, the taxes to meet, and all the rest of the cotter's frugal task. He helped Mary to contrive for all those brothers and sisters, doubtless often telling her: "Our Father knows that we have need of all these things." We can see one reason why He was drawn toward that Bethany household. Mary

had always found Him so wise and willing, no wonder that she said at Cana, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

Christ feels for the widow and the fatherless and for all who earn their bread in the sweat of their brow. What contempt that royal workman's way pours upon all pride of ease and luxury! Tasks that He so beautified and beatified let none now call common. That carpenter's shop was a thing that angels looked into, singing new praises. The throne exchanged for the workbench! Well might the sneer at "the carpenter" have frozen on the lips that framed it. Blessed testimony even of the blind and captious! The derision of the Nazarenes is the ascription of Christendom.

Two great questions I ask you to dwell upon for a little longer: First, that manhood is superior to circumstances. He who will follow the King's Son may well cross that lowly threshold to see how the tedious unites with the heroic. A true soul does not worry about an arena. That remote village, that cottage, those hill paths, sufficed a Saviour's thirty years of preparation! He needed no further apparatus of goodness. No drudgery delayed His full growth. Unanxious He waited till that work was done. There He thought out and wrought out the beatitudes, first showing

piety at home and requiting His parents. Remember, if you think your horizon narrowed:—

> "Just such as I He trod this earth,
> With every human load, but sin."

No matter if your life is hidden—if it is "hid with Christ in God." Simplicity may find felicity.

It also teaches us the dignity of work. Idleness is a sin. Only a worker is respectable—every other is a moral pauper. It is worker or shirker. Christ honored the royal law of labor. He knew real things and was not a charge to the world. He came "to make the best that the world knows native to the humblest." Coming to regenerate society, He never implied that "the world owes every man a living," whether he earns it or not. He came to serve. The gospel of the Mechanic refuses those who refuse a man's task. It ennobles as it enables the toilers of the world—and gives an evangel to the loom, the bench, the forge, "that they may be with the King for his work." The bone and sinew of the nation are in brawny arms matched with brave hearts. Whatever honors labor blesses the land, and all that degrades this debases that. Christ is the friend of all who toil and pray. A workingman Himself, He cares for the aching eyes and tired fingers, and

says, "Come unto me, ye that labor, and I will give you rest." He arrays Himself against the oppressor and the cheat—against him who wants another's work without paying for it, and against him who wants another's pay without working for it. He is the staunch ally of the honest toiler, and says of every one such, "The same is my brother."

III

THE TOWER OF SILOAM

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THE TOWER OF SILOAM

"Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay."—LUKE xiii. 2–5.

THESE questions and their answer affirm certain deep and necessary distinctions concerning the moral government of God, and to establish these distinctions and hold them fast can dispose of much that always will baffle a hasty and impatient interpretation of earth's events, and can vitally enlighten and encourage us amid their intricacies of trouble and surprise.

The distinction to be made is that which lies between the two features and departments of divine law—the one outward and physical, with its results consummated here; and the other inward and moral, with its issues and sanctions largely postponed.

For, note carefully just what Christ said. He

was speaking of "interpreting the time," with its especial public warnings and its especial significance and preluding of some mighty event; and some who heard Him immediately mentioned the recent official murder by which Pilate had made an example of certain Galileans, and to terrorize the restless agitators of Jerusalem had smitten a group of these, mingling as it were their blood with that of the sacrifices to which they had gathered. The mention of these men to Christ carried, perhaps, the suggestion that they were some radical fellow provincials of Himself, who, for temerity against the existing order of things, had paid as He yet might pay. He takes it up and adds yet another current instance. With the reserved funds of the temple, arbitrarily seized, Pilate had been constructing an aqueduct into Jerusalem. The chief Jews had violently protested, and when at Siloam a tower fell, crushing eighteen of the workmen, it had been pronounced a special visitation.

Our Lord insisted that the incident of such exceptional deaths was not to be misinterpreted in such a way as to turn attention from general public guilt and its general retribution. The dramatic exception was not to be pressed too far. These mangled men were but instances of what

all pride and perversity should meet. These violent warnings were but specimens of the catastrophe already rising cloudy out of the west.

He meant that no one should exonerate himself from partnership in the universal accountability. Harsher calamities were impending, which nothing but a profound and popular repentance could avert. Change or die, was the alternative for all men of Judæa or Galilee—nay, for all peoples and generations—until the final finality of judgment. Everywhere disorder is the outward prophecy and anticipative symptom of doom.

We well may note how aptly the word of Christ reads the moral sky and interprets current affairs. He spoke to the times, and the incidents and accidents of the day—these, here, the Jericho road, the tribute penny, the ostentatious givers, the unctuous sanctimony of the Pharisees, the carcass, and the eagles. It was direct, vivid, and no wonder the truth made a sensation as He let it in so full upon traditional sham and godless religion. The gossiping conclusion about the massacre and the falling masonry He showed to be superficial and evasive. Then surely we are to have better than a conventional and newspaper philosophy upon earth's happenings, and, instructed by Him who discerns the event, are to interpret nothing as

isolated from final purpose and common concern. Daily divine providence writes upon the walls that which "the wise shall understand."

But, further and especially, Christ taught that "these Galileans" and "those eighteen" were not thereby shown to be sinners and "offenders above all men." And therein He corrected the notion that material injuries to the bodies or estates of men have any constant relation to their moral characters and furnish any final criterion of these. These were not hurt because they were worse; others had not escaped because they were better. "I tell you, Nay."

It opens a gateway upon an avenue of profound reflection, whereon for a little let us go; finding, I trust, some solvents for questions otherwise too hard, some antidotes for satanic suggestions against God, some grateful offsets for things that now seem inscrutably against us. Suffering may be a near or a remote consequence; it is by no means the measure of the sin of the particular sufferer.

I. Christ's doctrine that day was the plainest possible assertion of a truth that we often confuse —namely, that physical law and moral law and their penalties and rewards are highly distinct.

He emphasizes the moment of this distinction.

By "distinct" I do not mean unrelated, unconnected, but so far separate in form and intent, in method and purpose, that we must not mix them. Both of these orders and their issues are of and under God, and reveal Him; nevertheless, mechanical means and results are separate from spiritual.

Physical laws, the forms of sense, and the programme of matter, these are different in kind from the controls and vindications of that inner being which partakes of the divine nature. There are analogies and correspondences all along the line, but nowhere identity or confusion. The body of the universe and the living spirit are two realities. Physics and psychology are not the same. They are together, but they are dual.

God's systemed and consistent ways of control (which, viewed from the under and empirical side, we call by the impersonal and abstract term of "laws") are related in the unity of that control; but the two elements deal with different areas and in separate ways appropriate to each. Each of us has in himself a synopsis of these two realms and dispensations, as covering the one his bodily and outward part, and the other his immaterial and immortal part. We are constantly and properly warned of the fallacy which lies in any physical illustration of moral fact. As a suggestion it may

be useful; as a complete parallel it always fails. Quantity and quality deal with terms not interchangeable.

There is a certain set of established facts, conformity to which makes the laws of bodily health. As solid and regular, but quite other, there is a set of facts conditioning character. Now, by the present intimacy of our souls with our bodies, these two codes, though entirely in different planes, do condition each other—they mutually (reciprocally) act and react. Moral sanity concerns bodily soundness. As the sky tinges the sea, so vigor has to do with virtue. But all this ordinary association by no means merges the identities of the two spheres. The relation of the individual soul with its present body, though so close and reflex, is, after all, but incidental. The station of the engineer upon the particular engine is not essential. The local is not the necessary. The soul is in but not of its convenient but changeable body. The physical may be transferred. Bodily, we "die daily." Metempsychosis is not merely possible, but certain.

And as it is with physical law in this nearest approach to our spirits, so it is with that physical law at large. Our embodiment has this double significance of both the nearness and the separate-

ness of life and its vessels. We are at once incarnate and supercarnal. However closely mundane passions crowd us, our souls are taller and look over their heads. The transient is adjudged now; the permanent waits.

Translating objective and subjective realities, each into the terms of the other, we must (if careful) distinguish their essential unlikeness, discerning between outward and inward success, between inner and outer penalty and reward. Understanding this division, we must keep in mind that the physical side is limited by physics—it is adjusted to the present only—its sanctions are insistently temporal; but the cardinal soul is under vital laws, to which this estate is but the first chapter, and whose compensations move in circles to which the article of death is but a mere item. God's physical justice is swift and immediate, but His moral justice advances "with slow pace and silent feet." One is prompt, the other is long-suffering; but both are sure. The slower mills grind finest. The casual exceptions—the immediate and signal punishments in kind—but show that those who disregard moral law are apt to disregard physical, and these reveal those. But still the inferences, though they do recognize judgment as already proceeding, cannot estimate

that which is deferred, nor estimate the ratio of guilt, nor safely attempt a theodicy (*i. e.*, an interpretation of total divine justice) from what is revealed in physical penalty of physical transgression.

The fact is premonitory, but its full implications still remain conjectural. The skein is too tangled; the problem is too involved. The unveiling of all the details—the real and complete evidence—awaits the ultimate day. When all is not accessible, opinion cannot be conclusive. Sodom does not always burn, not every Korah fats the jaws of the earth; but the readiness with which we make coincidence moral shows our intuition of a finer adjudication, in which the sumptuousness of Dives and the hunger of Lazarus shall be measured in other scales than those of time.

II. And Christ's "I tell you, Nay" warns us against any inferences that substitute the apparent for the real—warns us against inferring either too much or too little—warns us that inferences may be inconsequent—warns us both to expect and to await. The parallax is too short for us to anticipate the total issue; too long for us to doubt it.

The Greek tragedy—all the literature of tragedy—grasps the intuition of retributive justice, and lies all in the realm of conscience. Its poetic

justice is not imaginary, but it is imagined and its oracles are obscure, if (and only if) we think that present reality conforms to its futuritive dramatization. The interlaced facts reserve the full decision. That both comes and tarries.

"Some men's sins are evident, going before unto judgment; and some men also they follow after. In like manner also there are good works that are evident; and such as are otherwise cannot be hid" (1 Tim. v. 24, 25). There are two sets of sanctions suiting two phases of law. Just so far as a man knows and keeps either set of laws—the spiritual and the physical—just so far will he reap the blessings possible to that set. Temporal obedience, temporary blessing. Moral obedience, moral blessing. "Whatsoever a man soweth." "Each seed after its own kind." The one obedience ought to imply the other, but does not necessarily involve it.

Every kind of law is on his side who keeps it, and every kind of law is against him who breaks it. The law of gravity, of explosives, of health, of contract, of commerce, of art—these laws, heeded, become allies. To observe public morality finds public approval. And he who obeys God has God's approval. All obedience, so far as such, works its appropriate results. There

are no gratuitous or uncovenanted rewards nor any accidental penalties. The goodness and severity of each law is for itself and not for another. This is absolute in moral law, and (however complicated by the interference of other unjust wills) is the tendency in what is physical. And the bondage of corruption in which ignorance and violence distrain natural tendency is not always to endure.

Distinguish. A profane man may be robust; a false man may be an artist; a covetous man may be skillful; and a man may be devout, truthful, gentle, brave, and yet (under the operation of laws these virtues do not concern) may fail in business or die of consumption. Lord Bacon was the father of modern philosophy, but he took bribes. Marlborough never lost a battle, but he embezzled. Keats died in poverty. Bunyan was a jail bird. McKinley was shot.

Material success is no final token of God's favor, nor material failure of His frown. Approval for one kind of obedience abridges no penalty of other transgression. Penury and pain without piety have no promises as such. Of all rogues it is the duller part who enter prison. They are not necessarily "offenders above all." Inferior shrewdness (such is the law of shrewdness) allows

dull rascality to get its deserts more promptly. Thus the smart outdo the stupid—that proves only itself. If the "wicked prize itself buys out the law," the more wicked it, though terrestrially it escapes "unwhipt." But, saith Shakespeare, "'Tis not so above."

"Who did sin that this man was born blind—he or his parents?" "Neither," said Christ. The long circuit which transmits the shock of remote sin lies too deep for tracing. The problem is too involved for such glib judgments. Sin's disaster somewhere, and a race involved in the calamity—the innocent and the guilty all cousins in suffering, but the whole philosophy of the woeful spectacle not yet unsealed. Everything is furnished for reclamation, nothing for curiosity. In the race-unity of its trouble, human vision is made to await the consummation which is promised but not yet revealed. The law of sin and death operating even upon those (as babes) who have not sinned individually proves that God for this present regards mankind, and deals with it, as a vital unit. It is not simple, but it is evident. Long ago the blow fell upon corporate man of which all mortal ills are but the rowen—behold a race sin-smitten and the irretrievable physical penalty; but behold also a spiritual intervention from a plane above

physics; restoration by a Redeemer, and the trophies thereof! There is no collision nor clashing of law or plan. Exactly the seen and the unseen move in parallel obedience. Man is the only offender—man the law-breaker. But to decipher and trace responsibility and to assign physical consequence to moral cause, even through a third and fourth generation, is beyond our wisdom.

The ethical impulse must associate evils with evil, but, save to search and judge our own misdoings, we must endure and wait. All that is abnormal is akin; further we cannot go. Nature cannot tell us. Sphinx-like she looks with calm, impartial face upon moral good and evil. The crime she punishes is ignorance—she is physical and keeps neutrality. She is a parable of merciless law and a declaration of outer justice alone. In this she throws the spirit back upon its Maker for those other laws that heal those who meet them fully, and turns us toward those eyes that live. So we are bidden "to change our minds" from that evil which destroys unto that mercy which saves.

III. Christ used the Galilean slaughter and the Siloam accident to teach a far broader lesson than they grasped who sought to explain these.

We are to shun a mischievous moralizing which

once characterized a certain sort of Sunday-school book. There are present inner penalties, but they are not oftenest shown. The bad boy does not always drown, nor the good boy get rich. On the other hand, it is as nearsighted to reckon that smooth-going sin is immune and enviable. This is the paradox and puzzle of comfortable and complacent evil, but the very "prosperity of fools shall destroy them." It was the fallacy that underlay the superficial arguments of Job's three friends; that character is a matter of circumstantial evidence. This is the monotonous pessimism which for our warning is illustrated in the major part of the book of Ecclesiastes. The plaint is specious from one standpoint, but it is a submarine conception of the Giver of life! It puts the truisms of this world in place of the truth that God will overrule it all for those who wait for Him. Ecclesiastes dwells in commonplace misery, dismal, but not the whole matter; it is as little like Christianity as the catacombs are like a sunrise.

Mercy moves in its own orbit. Each side of tangible sin keeps its own boundaries. Inner forgiveness does not remit overt penalty. Restitution amends some offenses, but also some scars are worn to the grave. Rescue does not

restore the external status. Therefore a true repentance from evil as such does not stipulate the abatement of outer consequences. A drunkard reforms, his soul heals, but he nevertheless goes to an earlier grave. A Frederick Robertson teaches his generation, but his mind is strung too tight for his body, and he dies at thirty-seven. The Lord put away David's sin, but his child died. Ahab averted immediate penalty, but he was not accepted. The fruitless tree, in the parable just following our text, was respited but not spared.

The tendency is that "the wicked shall not live out half their days," but some grow gray in evil. The tendency is that "the righteous shall still bring forth fruit in old age," but sometimes high obedience has assured martyrdom. We may indulge no theory of special providences that evades the precision of physical effects. Even miracles would but confirm the rule.

Human law touches little else save that which concerns man in his person and property; it has to leave the deepest moral vindication for the world to come. Both for warning and for consolation we are taught to look toward celestial justice as the intrinsic thing. Disasters come. A fire devours here, an earthquake there. Cyclone and

lightning and rain and sunshine fall upon the just and the unjust. The train thunders into the collision bearing blasphemer and babe. The end is not here. Looking past these relentless shocks of mechanism, past the grimly beautiful exactness of the physical order, looking on to His moral disclosures of the ends which transcend mere force, we shall escape both a false confidence and a needless foreboding.

> "Nothing has the just to lose
> By worlds on worlds destroyed."

By and by, hearing the upper parts, we shall catch the harmony that now is figured only with this mysterious bass. We shall know how even stress and pain could coöperate for good to them that loved God. The convergence of laws will be seen. The clouds appear to be in the same sky with the sun and stars, but the vapors are really only of the earth. Pain is of this atmosphere; peace of that. Therefore we await emancipation from these mingled conditions, seeking His estimate who can carry us through all the surprises of mortality, and by the law of the spirit of life for ever free us from the law of sin and death.

IV

JOHN'S THREE DEFINITIONS OF GOD

IV

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"These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ."—JOHN xx. 31.

OF all the original twelve apostles, the apostle John left for all time the legacy that is of the deepest and most varied wealth.

The figure and temperament and acts of Peter are far more conspicuous in that scenery of Christ's century which is sketched in the first five New Testament books. The life and writing of the apostle Paul occupies a larger and more obvious place in the new Scripture. With either of these men we feel more intimately acquainted. Their personality and motion carries more of windage and tangible impact.

It is only by closer study that we come to feel the potency and draught of the great son of Zebedee. His manner and meaning and message require a more reflective analysis. He is less dramatic and apparent. The sweep of his thought and purpose comes more slowly to our appreciation. But the revelation of God in Christ found

in the personality and grasp of the fourth evangelist an instrument and an interpreter whose mystical insight and far-sighted comprehension gathered and conveyed the truth of truth with a sureness and a sublimity that shines on through the ages as the star Rigel shines in the belt of Orion, or Vega in the constellation Lyra. Immutable in the records which translate the Son of God into the language of adoring wonder and absolute loyalty, indispensable to our ever-deepening and never completed apprehension of that supreme and all-manifesting life, the words of him who lay on Jesus' breast are alive with that contact, and impart the palpitating love which there they learned.

It was his *life* to make the world know his Lord as he knew him. Christ imparted Himself to this profound and capable nature that through that nature He might evermore convey to souls like-minded the power and scope of His perpetual interpretation of God and of man, of creation and eternity. Of all those deeds John was an observer—the wonders, the mercies, the immaculate sorrows, the paradox of the cross, the tenantless and angel-ordered grave with its tenure as impotent as Pilate's seal, and its testimony as solid as the rock upon which streamed the

resurrection light. John knew all the actors and agents of those surcharged years. He knew Galilee and Judæa, priest and centurion, the home at Bethany, the family of Nazareth.

He heard and held the parables, the prayers, the promises, the prophecies. He was upon the Mount of Transfiguration and at Olivet. He knew Stephen and Paul. He understood Peter and Luke and James the Just. Thomas and Philip were his fellows. He shared the wonders of Pentecost. He met the furnace-blasts of persecution. He survived his comrades, and saw the seed flung abroad and taking root in the convictions of the complicated and changing world.

And at last, ripe for the task, remembering, reflecting, listening, with an eagle vision that looked down upon the world and time, and with a flight that swam in the upper and cloudless skies, he wrote. The last of the twelve witnesses, and ready when the call should come for the renewed visible companionship of the First and the Last and the Living One, he put to record that which he had heard and seen and handled of the Word of Life. It was mature, competent—it gave the inwardness as one soul had treasured and proved it, and it is holy with His presence who breathes through its transcendant thoughts. The whole

portrayal and portraiture is John's epitome of the things which were most surely believed by those most competent to try and to tell. It is also Christ's epitome of the beloved disciple. For what can understand, what reconstruct, what can prophesy, what impart, what can endure, like *love!*

The personality of this profound and intense believer and follower is revealed in what he wrote, it is also veiled by it. John is throughout, but he is retired by a greater. Yet while we follow the significance of the gesture, we need not forget him whose hand points us to the object.

What John saw and knew and felt is the reflex proof of his competency, and completes his testimony. The witness is also the result of the truth he utters.

What John's nature was is shown by His discernment who called him. What his training was the three years and the perhaps threescore that followed give evidence. The fisherman neither explains nor hinders the philosopher. For philosopher he was—loving wisdom and attaining it —surpassing Plato, and so all others, both in his material and his use of it—handling the last problems of being and divinity, of man and motive, of event, environment, and destiny. He does not propound problems, he solves them, and not an

interrogation, but an exclamation of satisfied joy punctuates his concluding word! To him *finis* was but relative and terrestrial. It is a conjunction which implies a world that *can* contain all the story. Moreover he is Baconian. He builds not upon propositions, but upon events. His task is to expound a biography. His final synthesis shows how the best that ever was declares the utmost that can be.

The Incarnation for him "solves all questions in the world and out of it." He binds the great given facts of Christ's life into a unity and reads them as a whole. He sees why the roots bear the fruits. The radical thought of John compasses all the queries and quests of the soul, and "What know we greater than the soul?" is the mental attitude of the modern world which, not in spite of the fact that he was poet, but because he was that too, finds its most vital voice in Alfred Tennyson. John was poet, too, and so the fisher of Galilee gathers the greatest both of reason and of rapture, and by love as by logic hath us in the net. Human utterance may fall below his search and sureness, but never can it surpass them. All other reasoning is but a second best, and commentary upon that second best fails of the upper springs.

How far and wide and high John's thought went—what it compassed and applied; what ranges of relation it beheld—this appears in three great declarations and definitions, which, under the revelation that is in Christ, he made concerning the essential and immutable nature of God. From Him of whom he testified "in Him was life; and the life was the light of men," he reached out and up to the thought of what the ultimate Being is. He states that Being's nature in three terms of its active demonstration. What God is, responsive intelligence must know by what He does, and know best and supremely through His nearest and most commanding and most appealing manifestation. What God is, in His inmost essence, what the life is which originates and answers our life, John had found in that One whose nature was to him the revelation of the eternal and the absolute. Here is ontology. And the grandeur and finality of the conceptions is the warrant of that appreciation of Jesus Christ out of which they grew.

These three resolute conclusions are: "God is Light," "God is Spirit," "God is Love."

These are final truths; and for John's grasp of them, all that he wrote being in evidence, Christ accounts and Christ only. Every estimate of

God, then as now, is colored and fashioned by the soul's estimate of Christ. Light, spirit, love; where either of these three is, there, in degree, God is; and where God is, there these three are. But these are elements of personality and have no reality outside of that. Our capacity to know them is the correspondence between us and the invisible nature which is before and under and through all things.

Light is a motion and a communication. It is a creative revelation. It is a thing, and darkness is not a thing, but an absence, just as silence is the negation of sound. A finer skill in physics may yet coördinate or even identify these two sets of vibrations, proving that sound is invisible color, and that color is inaudible sound. Then the ear and the eye are complementary, and we have two senses of the same thing. Then sunlight is only music in an upper scale and harmony is a vision. But truth, spoken or written, is still communication. Light is not only a medium and an agent, it is an author. Strictly, the ether is the agent and the light is that which travels it. Sight is the effect and also the end intended; but the wire that reddens under the electric charge, and the leaping nerve that receives the charge—these are not electricity itself. Force is not an agent, but a

manifestation—back of the thrill is will. The waves are messengers, but the message is the communication of a being who understands how to send the message to a being that understands how to receive it. Light is the communication of being! It does also reach and affect what is irresponsive and unaware. It is chemical too, but that is only to say that

"God fulfills Himself in many ways,"

and is not without effect even upon those who have only mineral or vegetable hearts.

John gazed deep into two wonderful eyes—his soul saw and knew that it was seen—and then feeling the source of infinite beauty, of all that creates and satisfies vision, even the inmost, he wrote, "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light." "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." He begins his story where Genesis began. The gospel, too, opens with the all-revealing Light. Creation is one with Christ.

Spirit. What is it? What is it *not?* The soul, which cannot define itself in terms of the material and formal world, knows, by a knowledge which objects may illustrate, and so were meant to, which objects at once answer and obey, that it

transcends these, and that they can neither originate nor deny it. It is mind, it is will, it is energy. It is parentage and birthright. John saw sense and substance obey the authority of a spirit. He recalled that Christ said, "I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you," and thereupon, under the conviction that the Unseen had revealed the compatibility of spirit with a veiling and limiting form, and that he had beheld the glory of the Word "by whom all things were *made*," he wrote, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, . . . He hath declared Him" and reported His word, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

It is spirit "that ordereth all things." Not a soulless world, but personal mind, all in all. Cause is back of process. Motion is the answer of life. Creation is a garment. The bodies out of which we peer are but clothing. Nature is instrumental, and is always in the ablative case. God is the nominative. Prayer is the highest act of self-affirmation.

"Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and spirit with spirit can meet;
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

God is Love. To love is to live. Really to live is to seek not one's own. Paul was taught by the

same teacher in that life whose ideal had its utterance in the 13th chapter of the Corinthian letter. The various testimony is providential—its authority is one. "He that loveth not knoweth not God." "Every one that loveth is born of God." Love is procreative.

But John had seen love bear and bleed. He knew love face to face. He understood what love would do to bring itself near to a world that lust had wrecked, and to heal the hearts that ache by love's loss. Did Plato, or Aristotle, or Leibnitz, or Kant, or Bacon ever uphold such an all-encompassing finality? Here is a greater than Newton, for love is the law of the soul's gravity. Love is of God and unto God. "He that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him."

There were three qualities or characteristics of the apostle John that were reflected and summed up in these three profound and crystal affirmations. These personal habits or aptitudes are shown in the temper and bearing of all that he wrote. He inadvertently yet entirely reveals his own nature in what he pens. It was because John was himself so susceptible to certain influences that he was so fit to impart them.

First, he is shown to have been remarkably intuitive and reflective. The deepest chords of

his being responded in music to the tones of his Master's discourse, and to the power and pathos of His deeds. To his rapt and intense meditation the simplest and most delicate hints were seminal and apocalyptic. Every fact is sacred to him upon which the realization of Christ's nature and errand is confirmed. He seized the very spirit of that life so lofty in its loneliness and so tenderly true. He appropriated so fully the subjective and essential thought of Christ that he at last is ready more than any other to see the gospel from Christ's own point of view, and to comprehend its final implications. He especially reports the words the Lord addresses to his very own. The other evangelists dwell more upon the detail and effect of the gracious wonders—John upon the meaning of Him who so wrought. The others unfold the swift parables—John handles their master key. Realistic and historical always, and so safe-guarded from pantheistic sublimation, evolving nothing from fancy, but ever sinking deeper the plummet of reflection, he thought so much, so far, but ever so close, that one feels that his very style is like his Teacher's, and that the voice that had so sunk into the depths of a capable soul is reproduced. The fourth Gospel is phonographic! John so meditated and pondered that the great reality was

clear to him. With that logic which is implicit and transcendant in *intuition*, he bridged and harmonized the antithesis between this divine nature and its human conditions. To him all that Christ did and said is explained only by what He *was*. Within, about, and up, and on, this, such a disciple of such a Master, *thought*. And by and by he wrote, and the book—from the oracular prologue to the simple epilogue that quietly wonders at the inexhaustible wealth of the material—is the *Gospel of Light*.

John, again, was a man of lofty imagination. It is a great faculty. No one is immortally instructive without it. It sees the invisible. It foreknows and foretells. It is mature and positive. It does not discuss, it *declares*. It takes the wings of the morning. To it space is but a terrestrial term, and time is no longer. Under the presiding conception that the Eternal Spirit had in the person of Christ shown Himself concrete with man, John views all light and life *sub specie eternitatis*. All the gleaming figures of Isaiah and Ezekiel, all scene and song, the splendors of temple and ceremony, the magnificence and awe of war, the scroll of record, the glory of lineage, the very stars and suns—become one metaphor of the great and terrible day of the Lord. It is

he, whose "soul was grown to match," that was in the spirit upon Patmos, thus to herald the terrors of a kindling world and the white beauty of the new Jerusalem.

Last and ever this John was a great lover. His meditating and exalted soul knew also that affinity and affection for a friend who could satisfy the depths, which taught him the inmost and uttermost God. And it is that love that breathes its benediction in the first Epistle. Its assurance is absolute. All is open. "We know," "we know" is the key of that whole harmony. The Son of Thunder speaks the valediction of all that band who companied with Christ. He has become a grandsire of the Church. He writes to all who love as his "little children." He has survived priest and imperator, the torch, the sword, the lions, and the mob. His venerable face is bathed with the soft forelight of a swiftly approaching joy. Anti-Christ troubles him no more. He sleeps. And still at this long remove He who guided that pen of John's would fix us upon the spirit, the light, the love, it registered. "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ."

V

CONVICTION, OR HEARSAY

V

CONVICTION, OR HEARSAY

"Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?"—JOHN xviii. 34.

A QUESTION is a great opener. This was the way of Socrates. It was eminently the way of Christ. Both were hated because they were so penetrating and so unavoidable. It is because questioning is so personal that conventionality holds it to be rude. It is the instinct of inquisitiveness. It is the shortest cut to information. It is the way of the child and of the scholar. It is the key of knowledge. It is alike a keen tool and a pointed weapon. The teacher, the physician, the lawyer, must each acquire skill in interrogation. To catechise means to *put to the echo.* The prologue of Luke (i. 4) says, "that thou mightest know the infallibility concerning the things wherein thou wast catechised." All questions are *demands at sight.*

Life is full of questions—direct, persistent, inevitable. Life itself is all one great question. To the query "what is your life?" all our char-

acters are articulate replies, deep or shallow, firm or weak, vague or clear. To *ask* and to *answer* is to live.

We should be thankful for the many times our Lord was so narrowly questioned. We are indebted to the very cavils that drew out many of His clearest words. He *sought* to be questioned and compelled it. He invited interview and rewarded it. Still He does both. He knows how much man needs to ask and to hear, and would leave none to the miseries of a questioning conscience and an unanswered heart.

We all know Munkacsy's picture of Christ before Pilate, but when we see the perplexed and vexed face of the Roman, though *in sedilê*, and the calm penetrative look of Him who stands to be cross-examined, we feel that the title should be reversed, and that the scene portrays *Pilate before Christ!*

The sequel of that dialogue makes it intense, and it is full of interlinear truth. More readily to examine Christ the prefect takes Him aside, but, lo! immediately positions are reversed, and the prisoner is the examiner, having the thoughts of his heart revealed. And we, if we search this Scripture to-day, shall find that it is really searching us. So God grant it may, and to our eternal

benefit! With a certain vacillation and also (so we may think) with an effort toward official dignity, Pilate asks, "Art *Thou* a king?" But before any answer to that there rises another matter—quiet but so searching—our text, "Sayest thou this," etc. Past the diplomacy and the maneuvering, Christ makes the most of the opportunity (slight as it is), and reaches clear in after Pilate's soul. He makes that anteroom an inquiry room, and knocks hard at the door of a heart. But Pilate throws another bolt. He shrinks deeper into himself, and with a poor disdain, disclaiming all personal concern, he retorts, "Am I a Jew?" —"Told me?"—of course, how else? He evades, —"what hast thou done?" But Christ will not waive that previous question as to His kingship, and He declares wherein and whereunto He is royal. *Not* a monarch after the manner of men —not martial. Such a king as the Jews would not have. A Messiah that was not a nationalist, a patriot in their narrow sense they renounced. They hated a claim to a sovereignty which at once disavowed their weapons and their motives. They demanded a visible empire after their own partisanship and passion. Their piety was all provincial.

But Christ's claim to a spiritual dominion, to

the kingliness of *truth*, should have acquitted Him of any offense against Cæsar. *Convert* He would, but not *subvert*.

What an immortal opportunity Pilate had to be brave and just! Alas, it passes! So in that dialogue which every soul holds *once* with Christ, there is a critical nearest instant when He deepens mere verbal curiosity into a matter of life or death. His searching scrutiny is that we may realize what lies just under all superficial questions.

You ask somewhat? Would you know what it implies? *Would* you learn what I am? Do *you* ask? Or is it all forced upon you by outer and unwelcome pressure? Is it solemn, earnest, or perfunctory? Is it the *man* who asks or the official? Is it original or borrowed?

This interview between the temporary prefect and the Lord of life emphatically teaches the *everlasting distinction between faith and hearsay*, —between *belief* and *make-believe*.

Christ distinguishes as to the *quality* of what is said to Him and of Him. That scene and that word urges us to discriminate deep-down honesty toward the Truthful One, from all compulsory, controversial, or conventional talk about Him. Faith to be real must be without duress,—for one's self "and not for another." Fluency of

pious phrase, traditional catchwords, all religion of hearsay, must meet His inquisition whose qualitative analysis puts us all to the test. Confession of Christ cannot be proxied or deputized. Real thought may be evaded by trite and borrowed words. It is not how much we believe, but *how much we believe it.* Statements may be true and yet be meaningless if we have not wrestled out, each man his own way, to their mastery. Candor and even capacity are sacrificed if we consent to measure right by prejudice or party.

It is a vice of too much of our thinking to-day that we get it by subscription and at club rates. Many are too preoccupied or impatient to do their own thinking and want their ideas peptonized. The partisanships of affirmation and of negation are alike external to personal responsibility. They asked with triumph in *His* day, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?"—but it was a *non sequitur. Credo* is not plural. Nothing so stultifies conscience as to borrow one's opinions of duty. Christ said to such, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in yourselves." "That which my lips know they shall speak sincerely" is the only safeguard of personal truth. And if cant of affirmation is the bane of genuineness, is not the cant of denial equally hollow?

Second-hand doubt, ready-made objection, is at once the shallowest and most unmanly. It, too, says only "what some other told it."

The propaganda of unbelief finds market for its flimsy wares mainly among those gaping critics of gospel duty who so readily mistake sciolism for scholarship, and who are willing to substitute for resolute reasons a slanderous quotation.

It is strange how those who renounce the highest authority are willing to accept the lowest, and to put the misconceptions of domineering objectors in place of the self-testifying Lord! This is the suicide of individuality.

We have a right to demand vigilant pains-taking conviction from one another, and that, however little one may say, that much shall have been made his very own. Nothing so becomes the soul as *homespun*. For what is vitally true to some other shall be false in you if you but adopt it arbitrarily.

That which we say of God or to God, of Christ or to Christ—if it is only memoriter or rote—is quite another thing from actual experience. A real opinion and purpose is vital, not artificial, and has reproductive power, but an opinion about an opinion is sterile, and, as Paul said of an idol, "It is nothing in the world." Belief in Christ is more

than a belief in a belief. If religion (according to the best etymology) is from the verb *relĕgere*, meaning to ponder, it cannot be the thoughtless adoption of the thought of some one else. Each man must chew his own food!

Nor can religion *in the present indicative* use the terms of *the imperfect subjunctive*. Conviction is far more than a reminiscence. To recite what once was my own is not necessarily to avow it *now*. My own deepest being must reënact the great submissions and fervent consecrations of the saints passed on or I cannot truly share them. My to-day must break its own path from yesterday to to-morrow. "Considering the issue" of noble lives we are to imitate their *faith*, not copy their inflections—

> "They climbed the steep ascent to Heaven,
> Through peril, toil, and pain;
> O God, to us may grace be given
> To follow in their train!"

To be "carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease" is to renounce the sword and wish for the ambulance. The soft litter of the angels is only for souls who have quit them like men in the forefront of the battle. Will and work are the hard disciplines of high virtue. The studies that cost us most train us best. Character does *not* pro-

ceed on "the line of the least resistance." Christianity is not bowing at Christ's name, but bearing Christ's *yoke*.

"SAYEST THOU THIS THING OF THYSELF?" or is your prayer but an echo, your praise the trill of the mocking bird, your hope and assurance borrowed, your theory of life plagiarized, your diary a copy book! Is Christ your *utility* or your *end?* Peacocks and parrots are birds of low flight; it is the song of the lark that scales the skies.

The vice of imitativeness is not merely that it offers a cheap substitute for originality, but that it destroys the power of becoming original. We live in a time when the mechanical and the convenient greatly menaces the spontaneous and the intuitive. We are tempted by lithograph and process to lose the power of free-hand and to become parasites. Almost all things are furnished by pattern and quantity. We feed on canned foods, and think that a check settles all balances. We content ourselves with calling near-sightedness omniscience. We pay editors to think for us, and we build our dwellings by the block.

Such a searching text as this recalls us. It challenges that laziness in which individuality wilts. It shows the reflex menace of lip-service.

In adjuring Pilate to consider the sources of his speech, Christ warns us all against false pretenses. For the one great thing not to be compounded for, not to be manufactured, or lent, or bought, is *faith.* For good faith takes the juror's pledge. To say *I believe* should be as careful and as solemn as an oath. A vote is literally a *vow.* Creed is *non-transferable.* An actual creed is an honest account of stock. If it is not alive it is stale. Hearsay is no final evidence. One cannot give away experience.

I do not plead for less creed, but for more—for *far* more. But not so much more in quantity as in *quality,* and as to quality, not *more* in the objective realities and relations of religion, as of our subjective hold of these. For the outer to be the sign of the inner—that the mighty protest, *Credo,* may have *three* dimensions, not only length and breadth, but also *depth.* Any hesitation is better than a glibness which tricks out its debility, whether of doubt or devotion, in shreds of pious memoirs and scraps of Bible gotten earwise. Audit is one thing, credit quite another. Better five words with the understanding than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. Do we *know it?* Do we *mean it?* Formulas which have been vital to others may be barren to us.

We profane Scripture when we turn phrases that once breathed and burned and bled into commonplace shibboleths.

Mme. de Stael once said, "Better a smaller vocabulary and a fuller heart!" True religion is not a self-monologue, but a dialogue with the Father of our spirits. It means reciprocity. The thing needful is not that we recite the great creeds of the fourth century, or match with music the lyric fervors of Charles Wesley and Henry Lyte —great as these are—but that we "speak that we do know."

First *test*, then *testimony*. It is the tones of experience that command attention. What we have struggled out is ours. To every earnest soul there comes a time when it must revise what it has till then taken for granted, and change the ore of opinion to the metal of conviction. Food, coin, knowledge—we only own what we use, the rest *owns us*.

Let us ask not fewer questions of Christ, but only such as we are willing He should answer in His own way. The probe is in the hand of One who is as tender as He is sure. He may hurt, but He can heal. You who so far have taken Christ upon the representations, or worse, upon the misrepresentations, of others, "ask, and ye

shall receive!" Hear *Him*. If you were logical to your premises—inadequate as they may be—if you would *follow* even your latent convictions of what is true in Him, you would come to His feet, yes, to His arms, as both your Sovereign and Saviour, and say "*My* King!" And so, with Paul, to others (1 Thes. i. 5), "Our gospel came *not unto you in word only*, but," etc. Your heart will not be nonplussed if you find Him whose work since He was twelve years old has been hearing and answering questions; but if not—!

VI

THE UNKNOWN GOD

VI

THE UNKNOWN GOD

"In all things I observe you as *exceedingly religious;* for, passing along and noting your objects of worship, I found also an altar upon which had been inscribed *To the Unknown God*, what therefore ye not knowing worship *that do* I announce to you."—ACTS xvii. 22, 23. (*Author's translation.*)

THAT story in the seventeenth chapter of The Acts gives us the points of contact and of difference between the philosophy of the antique world and the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is almost the strongest passage in the book. It burns with wisdom and suggestion. The circumstances introduce the speech, whose brief outline of only about three hundred words is yet enough to show Paul's courage as a Christian and his skill as an orator. Adroit in conciliation, delicate in suggestion, thorough in its adaptation, simple and sweeping in its logic, issuing in that testimony of which he dare not be silent, and which is still the crux and the scandal of worldly wisdom—it was just like Paul from first to last.

Silas and Timothy had been left behind at that

Berœa where the Scriptures of the prophets had such honor, and, waiting for them, all alone, Paul sees Athens where the only prophets are the poets. It is the city of Athenè—goddess of skill and wisdom. All Hellenic art and story and worship and thought centered there. In what it was it stood and stands peerless, supreme. Beautiful for situation, and adorned beyond the rivalry of all later ages, of vast intellectual prestige, of a never-satisfied mental curiosity—it was "the eye of Greece," and is the wonder of time. Schools, sybarites, strangers, slaves—and over all the breath of moral decay. Citizens and all comers alike were having leisure for nothing other than to tell or to hear some "*newer* thing." The latest novelty was the most welcome—*quid nunc?*

Great Aristotle and greater Plato were long dead, and less noble forms of thought now ruled this city of discussions. And this degeneracy of thought showed the incompetency of even the loftiest type of unheavened human reason to resist the sensualism that seeks its end in pleasures, and the fatalism whose pride of aspiration finds its conclusion in despair.

What philosophy, as such, could do, had there been done. Idolatry had exhausted invention. Priests, sacrifices, shrines, festal days, were always

in evidence, but this capital of æsthetics was still hopelessly unsatisfied and restless—unhappy and impatient—and ritual had lost its earnestness.

> "When love begins to sicken and decay
> It useth an enforced ceremony."

Exquisite refinement of language, subtlety of dialectic, splendor of technique, memory of renown—all that made Athens the gossip of the world, had yet failed of that final peace without which conscience arrays man in a miserable quarrel with himself and all things.

What has Paul to say to this Boston of Greece, and what has it to say to him? See! He moves about, inspecting, reflecting, and the city full of idols rouses him to a "paroxysm." All this beauty and no hallowing knowledge of good. Variety itself a confession of spiritual uncertainty. Simplicity nowhere. He must speak. And so in the little synagogue, and the great agora, or market place, he held daily dialogue with all comers. The omnipresent mistake gave him a constant text—the true God and eternal life. Everywhere he looked there was a shrine with its label. As one of their own satirists had said, "It was easier in Athens to find a god than to find a man."

His protest is heard of; for never can be hid a

resolute man with a true word! The philosophers encounter him to make the cause of Athens their own. They will, if they can, smother him with formulas, riddle him with categories, and silence him as absurd.

Two theories of human life are there—self-sufficient, hostile, inconclusive—the pride of pleasure and the pleasure of pride. The Epicureans were the Greek Sadducees. Sinking below the level of him whose name they held, they had become frivolous, and reason for them was but a procuress. With them, though apparently so opposite, came certain of the Stoics, austere, cynical, churlish—at the best fatalists defying the inevitable. Without hope, both. As pithy Thomas Fuller (p. 223) puts it: "The first standing for the anarchy of fortune, the second for the tyranny of fate." They began with a sneer and an epithet: "What would this babbler say?"—the bird that picked up seeds in the street cackling as he did so—a *crow*. "He seems to be an announcer of alien gods." Strange indeed would his themes be to them. Yet, withal, his sincerity has an unusual flavor. So they have him to the Areopagus, or Hill of Mars, an open and lofty platform of limestone near by, where sat the court Solon had instituted for the trial of capital offenses, where, upon seats hewn from

the natural rock, the supreme judges held their venerable sessions. No violence is implied, though the place may have been chosen as carrying a suggestion of intimidation.

But it fitted the man and his theme, as they ask him, with ironical courtesy, "May we know what this new teaching is?" It was upon the charge of treasonable novelty of opinion that, long before, this Athens had sentenced Socrates. Socrates would have enjoyed this scene. Paul has permission. Enough. It is under that perfect sky,—about, the city with its lustrous architectures,—afar, the countless twinkling of the sea,—at hand, the chattering, curious company. But in him, now to speak, is a tremendous memory and a devoted hope whose passion no flouting can daunt. Men are his occasion, and however curt or critical their attention, all afforded moments are his opportunity. There he stood intrepid before rhetoricians and philosophers to tell them of life, and, if they would but hear, of Him who is the very wisdom of God. For who has so written His wisdom upon the mind and heart of men as that Jesus whom Paul preached? What is any history of philosophy worth that forgets that Teacher of teachers—Christ?

Fragmentary as this sketch of Luke's must

be, it shows Paul's masterful tact. Wisest and shrewdest of all known introductions. It is filled with local color and smoothes the way while it arrests attention. Direct, without bluntness, it shows the skill of one who could make the most of an opportunity. Paul is a Christian diplomat. It was notable wit—so Acts xxii. 1–3, xxiii. 6, xxiv. 10, xxvi. 12, xxviii. 17, 19. Remembering such instances, it is curious indeed that both the revisions of 1611 and 1881 should fail to translate justly the word with which Paul so keenly and truthfully characterized the Athenians. He did not tell them that they were "superstitious," but that they were "more than ordinarily religious." He is not so maladroit as to rebuff them at the outset, and lose his one possible advantage. Moreover, their altars and temples are a positive point in his argument. "Passing along and noting their objects of worship," particularly he had been impressed with one inscribed, "*Ἀγνώστῳ Θεῷ*"—what, therefore, they *unknowing* worship, that will Paul declare to them. Two sentences and the ground is cleared for the theme. It is as clean and keen as a lancet. There is no finer instance of wise introduction in all the annals of speech. Paul had seen Athens soberly, as every true man must consider any great city—he ap-

preciated its physical beauty and looked beyond this. "Religious"—all men are that. It is the exceeding prerogative and function of man so to be. Something must be worshiped, image or reality. Paul, too, is a worshiper. H*e knows* of whom.

The instinct is an immense avowal. Yet one may worship an unknown god and die amid the distractions of a miscellaneous idoldom. Thirst is not water, and craving is not knowledge. Paul would direct this appealing and appalling hunger to a reasonable object. He would shed upon this confessed want the light of an unguessed love, and lead it to the shelter of an infinite promise. Not for naught in this city of idols and idlers had he specially considered the inscription which (note the courtesy of the pluperfect tense—not by those before him) "*had* been written."

In that epigraph, as in a mirror, idolatry must recognize at once its instinct and its failure. It confessed the vagueness and yet the desire—the hunger and the starvation. It was a vast and helpless interrogation. [Eder. on *Proph.*, 42, 43.] Showing capacity for God, it showed also the incapacity of the errant and self-willed reason to reach Him; for even in lofty Athens polytheism and pantheism was the result. That personal,

holy, merciful, redemptive One, it knew not. In this very sanctuary of intellect, of letters, and of art, man confessed that such a God was "far above, out of his sight."

How Paul felt the pathos of it all, imagine. He would take that hand raised in the darkness, and clutching vainly "if haply it might find Him," and guide cynic and sophist to the One so near. He would answer the query and the quest—show the path they had missed, and erase the word "UNKNOWN."

He does not refute, he interprets. Hebrew Scripture, in form, he does not once quote, for with them this has no authority; rather he cites "one of their own poets," and yet the spirit of the Psalms and of Isaiah is in all he says there. He adapts himself to their logic, and the so brief summary furnished us yet shows a most systematic and broad argument.

God the Maker of the Cosmos and its ruler—not confined (and here suppose the sweeping gesture toward the splendid structures all about) to shrines made by hands. First cause and final end of being! Giver of all life—maintainer of it all! His unity and so the unity of all men, who in Him move and *are*. All races His offspring, and so brother-bound. Not the "art and study"

of man, but the heart is the answer. The creature more than the things he fashions,—God more. Idolatry and its idea unworthy then of both the father and the child. God's likeness *within*. Derivation teaching dependence. The times of this "agnosticism" God overlooked. His forbearance with it, His present call to a "change of mind." The judgment of all the habitable earth by a Man whom He had appointed and the assurance thereof by His resurrection.

Here on the Hill of Mars he cited Athens to face God. Swift, sure, fervid—he strode from premiss to conclusion.

Hearing of a "resurrection of dead men" some, thereupon, were jeering; some postponed; and Paul knew himself dismissed. Some stuck to him, one of them a judge of the court, one woman, by name Damaris, and others. So it was that day, so it is this day. All that Paul could he did. No church rose there; no letter to Athens is known. Pride of place, exclusiveness of race, conceit of knowledge, theory that denied the wisdom and the power of the God of life and Lord of death—whatever it was, they closed the testimony of that God whose community of relation to all men contains the community of all men's relation to Him; whose providence clasps all the issues of

all hearts; who leaves none groping in spiritual orphanage that is willing to recognize His presence and do His will. Philosophers as they were, they did not love this deepest and simplest wisdom. They went their ways and Paul went his. And still the altar stood—"to whom it may concern!" It stands yet, in a figure, for those who prefer it—

"*Τῳ αγνωστω Θεῳ*!"

Far Athens went, but not far enough. Gods many were hers, but not *God!*

Certain things remain to reconsider.

First, that all our theories of life tread out from our conception of God. He, the Maker, must be the first proposition of any intelligible creed. Any whole theory of the creation must hold it subordinate to the Creator—center, circumference, and bond of all that is. Without Him all is absurd and unreal. He cannot be ignored—men have to choose an opinion concerning Him. "The thought of God (says another) spans the history of humanity as the rainbow hangs over the brink of the waterfall, always apparently about to be swept away by the impetuous waters, yet always there." He conditions our being and our thought. Living by Him and in Him we ought to live to Him; for *we are His.* And He is accessible—

"clearly seen by the *creation*." What we read out He wrote in. It is not anonymous, but rather a great acrostic, which read up and down and not sidewise spells a name. That very shrine at Athens was a cryptogram of truth.

And He, "in whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind," is a Redeemer. He has manifested Himself in a Man —"borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows"— "brought life and immortality to light." The cross is God's philosophy of sin and deliverance. He seeks the heart of the world with that light.

An idol is at once an acknowledgment and a substitute. It depreciates both God and man. "The workman made it." Divinity and humanity together suffer. That which puts God nearest and loveliest lifts man furthest out of the rapacities of selfishness. Nothing or all. Then let us ask ourselves whether we live up to the Son of man as well as Athens lived up to her idolatries, and whether a mythology practiced is not better than a Christology only praised.

Think of the proposition, an "*unknown* GOD!" And think of bending now at that altar! Yet modern credulity has enlarged upon that of Greece, and writes, to an *unknowable God!*—a God who *cannot* reveal Himself to His creature—a creature

who *cannot know!*—both belittled. Perception shorn of reflection indeed. How infinitely knowing is this agnosticism! How smooth the modesty of this large claim that God is unintelligible! It is petulantly evasive—it is in the wish and the will. It ignores the question, "What think ye of Christ?"

Its premiss is *a priori*—manufactured. It begs the very question. And it saws off the bough it sits on—for what is intelligence good for when it has committed parricide? And why is its eager denial so reiterative, except that some reality urges it on! It, with mock politeness, conducts God to the frontier. It "does not like to retain Him in its knowledge." Why? Ask Athens! What then? Ask Athens! Of *what* devotion is this ignorance the mother,—in the name of knowledge refusing its possibility?

Is it not time finally to repudiate the crass dogmatism, which first assumes and then asserts that preoccupation with the apparatus of creation is a sufficient reason to forget its origin and ends? Is not that a deep astigmatism which dissects a bat's eye and abjures the implications of the mind that does it? Noble is intellectual curiosity toward all fact, but is not the thinker a fact? Is not the intuition of moral responsibility a fact? Shall

one proclaim the unseen atom and lampoon the unseen God? The animus of that idolatry of mere objects, which, while at every stage it must use subjectivity,—and personality evades its honest analysis, and which retires all the problems of the soul and its laws,—is an animus whose denials are explained by its dislikes. The agnostic is a kind of moral cretin! Agnosticism preferred is a kind of idiocy, and at last is mental suicide!

Its Latin equivalent is *ignoramus*. It is not of the wit, but of the will. It shuts its eyes and then declares it cannot see.

The x with which Paul factored was beyond the algebra of mere sense; it was the sign of the cross. The soul's answer to the soul of its Maker was his major premiss, and led to the depths of wisdom and knowledge—"God in Christ."

And still the same foundational facts that he used are "to put to silence the agnosticism of irrational men." Creative intelligence, immanent and dominant personality, strenuous love—the gracious and holy One to whom we are akin. This is the bed-rock of theism and of Christianity.

> "Earth's crammed with heaven,
> And every common bush afire with God."

Quibble, or quarrel, or accept Him—He is here! No discovery of His ways can banish Him. Oaths

and prayers, both, pronounce His name. The accent varies as we put Him into the crucible of a theory, or put ourselves in the crucible of prayer. Wordy Athens missed the central truth which by a willing surrender Paul had found. "We know Him whom we have believed" was his onward cry. Not at that end of the scalpel, but at this!

And we may know. Near He is. One wrote upon a blackboard,—"God is nowhere": but a little child spelled it out,—"God is n-o-w h-e-r-e." A child's longing, a child's faith, a child's assurance and love, and that threshold is passed at whose lowly lintel a self-willed philosophy bumps its proud head! I, for my part, will stick to Paul, all Athenianism to the contrary notwithstanding. I erase the word "ἀγνώστῳ." I "know in part; but I shall know even as I have been known."

VII

THE SANCTIONS OF LAW

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"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."
—2 Cor. v. 11.

In the face of that punishment of the slayer of President McKinley, let me undertake to make "manifest in your consciences" some of the profound reasons that underlie what we call the *sanctions of the law.* A sanction is that which *binds* law by administration. It declares and assures that the authority to command goes with the purpose and the power to execute the results of obedience and of disobedience. Legislation shorn of executive ability is nullified and discredited. Law is not in the subjunctive but in the imperative mood. Authority is not a "bureau of advice," but a right and a purpose to control. It declares a method of administration. It formulates obligation. It bases upon a right. It certifies a purpose. It implies power. It reveals consequences.

These consequences are sanctions. Its consequences, whether of pain or of peace, make good

its declarations and magnify its intention. They refer to the authority as actual, potential, consistent, and complete. The purpose of law is to secure right action—harmony with its authority—life, order, blessing; and this purpose is so real and vital that it will not tolerate trifling, and that it will visit with adverse severity those who offend its spirit and behests. A good law—a good government—has its security in approving and securing good men, and this it does in demonstrating by active results that it intends to secure them from the caprice or malice of those who are contentious and will not obey its truth. If it did not promise and perform both sets of results it would be a failure.

Power to uphold must therefore go with authority to declare, if there is to be a real government. Offenders must suffer the due consequences of their offense. This is the only possible way if the law is to be respected. Results are necessary corollaries, and they bind (or sanction) the law. The fact of right or wrong relation to the authority dictates the appropriate consequences. These are implicit in the command. They are notified as showing that the issues are vital. A true as opposed to a careless administration of law must become therefore a terror to evil doers and a

praise to them that do well. The doing regulates the allotment.

A false administration, neglecting or inverting this, is shown in the barter of law, in the surrender of its sanctions, in the subversion of its own claim to administer, and becomes a praise to evil doers and a terror to them that do well! It institutes a "ring." It misgoverns. It prostitutes justice. It prostrates all guarantees of right liberty. The sanctions are thus the judgment which is passed upon the given government—be it of a city, or of a people, as right or as wrong.

Some sanctions are inevitable. Tyranny has its own. Anarchy has its own. Righteousness has its own. For better or worse they *are*. Good or bad, they are stringent. They are locked in the reasonable relation between consequence and cause. Were it not so, all the forces in which we are set were irrational. Because "madness lies that way," sanity lies the other way.

To know "the fear of the Lord" is to know that His wisdom and will and power are pledged together to the maintenance of His actual authority. The world that is, is a world where creation and creature are bound in law and right to their Creator. His control is the condition of the satisfaction of the life He begat, and of the

realm He made for its loyal exercise. The sanctions of His laws for things and for souls are everywhere shown. Whatever authority He delegates has these behind it. All right rule conforms so far to His, and the rationality and justice of it, in any case, is illuminated by the issuing results that make it binding.

The law of love, as the law of gravity, has its logical penalties and reward. All control implies the consequences of order and of disorder. It is this reasonable sequence that makes the physical world intelligible and makes the science thereof possible. If law were incoherent (that is, without coherent effects) we could not *know*. Organized knowledge implies an organized world. All personal knowledge asserts a personal supreme Ruler. A universe without that were a chaos. That we can reason asserts God and His consistency. The continuity of any law of God involves a principle that is as real and as regnant in morals as in physics. Our observations and our instincts, therefore, coincide in expecting certain events to follow certain relations. But these expectations realized are the manifest sanctions of the law. They declare its persistency and its inviolability. Those who run against it confirm it.

Moral responsibility is structural in this world

of God. Justice is a reality. Particular justice here is based upon "the powers of the world to come." The scale extends far, far, beyond any present instances, and sinks into a thoughtful apprehension stern premonitions of changeless principles. Through all opaque tradition and confused sentiment it darts prophetic rays of an eternal and infrangible authority, under which we have our being and before whose vindications we must stand.

Equal law, whose pedestal is reared above the tyranny which usurps true authority and the lawlessness which denies it, stands in those intuitions of divine control which alike rebuke Ishmael and Cain.

Beast rule—denying all wrong because denying all right, all the havoc of passion and will-violence that would abolish the responsibility it hates, that would sin and *not* suffer, that resents those sanctions which confirm the law—is met even in human courts by that conscience of mankind which reflects a God of rectitude, who would not be worthy if He were neutral toward disobedience. Were His will weak and vacillating, were not His resources pledged to the life that is life indeed, and pledged against the life that is death—did He not magnify and make honorable the law, then

were there no barriers against a revolutionized universe.

The instinct which connects penalty with perversity—the capacity of moral indignation before flagrant injustice, the public determination to visit offenders against even earth's rational order—these show a part of God's ways, and catch the rustle of His skirts. To apologize for the strictness of righteousness is to *de*-moralize and *de*-rationalize all human relation. Purpose to enforce is the king-bolt of *all* law, and of that purpose the sanction, in whatever degree, is the object lesson. Reward and punishment are exemplary. The ends of punishment *may* include chastisement and reclamation, but they include far more. Penalty may be *detersive* as to the individual, but it must be *deterrent* as to others. It considers public and general influence—it is meant to make contempt of court impossible—it is meant to show that justice is for the just by showing that it is against the unjust. It reveals what the true life is by showing what it cannot be.

No punishment is an equivalent for the offense; it cannot square the books; it is not merely an exacted fine; it cannot be expiation. Therefore it is not vindictive (that is, revengeful—a trying to "get even," pain for pain), but it is *vindicative*.

Torture is malicious and malice is not justice. Justice is not arbitrary, but explanatory of the tendency and issue of evil. It warns from death that it may impart life. It inflicts that it may prevent. It must visit obduracy or it would not be justice. So it was a Saviour who warned from the danger of "eternal sin." The "strong delusion" which resents control and disdains obedience and scoffs at penalty is a cause, but it is first a result. "The transgression of the wicked uttereth its oracle within his heart" (Psa. xxxvi. 1, 2, *R. V.*, margin), and the result of its determined persistency is banishment from the probation it scorns. Effrontery toward a holy God—and the wholeness of the conditions of life—*should* fail; bravado *should* have its impotence to thwart right solemnly affirmed. The lie of atheism and its anarchy *should* "gnaw its own tongue!" He who created us moral beings—with reason to see and wills to choose—must treat us both in retribution and reward under the terms of our moral nature, else a mutable authority and all woe to every one involved, as every one would be, in the wreckage of God.

For God to make known the tendency of lawlessness is mercy. Law is not a trap. The label of "poison" is an admonition to let it alone. If

it did not kill those who abuse it, the label were a lie. If it does kill, it is kindness to have it known. And there is that kills. If life were not an alternative, it were but mechanical. Law involves conditions. Motion itself is conditioned by resistances. Law declares purpose, that certain forces shall act so and so, and their action and reaction are equal. A world of motion must either be a world of law or a world of confusion. The sanctions signify that law *is* regular because they provide for the compensation of emergencies. Construction is adaptation to condition. The rails declare the nature of the locomotive. Rules regulate life that it may learn and keep the conditions proper to it. He who created declares whereunto and wherein. This declaration, however ascertained, is law. Law, then, is not tentative nor subjunctive, but indicative and imperative. Sanctions are a necessary part of its reality. Without these it could not be. They *are*—both in reason and in fact. Back of what *is*, we cannot go. In that which is, we think and *are*.

This is fundamental to every exercise of intelligence and will. To theorize without fact is to attempt a mental vacuum. It is both unscientific and immoral; for that it refuses to know in order that it may refuse to do. We cannot go behind

that law of being which being exhibits. The Creator is demonstrated in that kind of a creation in which, by Him, we, the creatures, are set.

Strangely enough, and in utter inconsistency with every postulate of their hedonism (the doctrine that pleasure is the final end), John Stuart Mill and his father both objected that Christianity is immoral because it sets forth a background of penalty and reward. But there the background is even upon the present scale—all criminal jurisprudence recognizes it. Christ did not come to change the natural law of transgression, but to change the attitude and relation to it of a culprit, but not irrecoverable, race. The gospel is not an evasion of law, but honors it while it shows *how* God may be just and yet forgive. It declares the law of the spirit of a new life which begins in the confession of judgment, which pleads guilty, and which, under the wonderful conditions of a mercy, accepted *as such*, turns back toward the righteous Will sin had refused to its undoing. It answers the desperate cry of the suffocating heart, "how can man *be just* with God?" A gospel that surrendered law would be the *good news* that God had abdicated!—what were such a gospel worth? Who would administer it? It were a Robespierre Republic!

No. The function of a supreme and righteous authority is to show its righteousness to be supreme, and "submission to the righteousness of God" recognizes and adores that justice which is not a means but an end, and to God's will it utters its total *Amen!*

We study the sanctions of the law most readily by observing penalty. It is obvious and general. There are a thousand diseases; there is but one kind of health. Blessedness is the reward. It is the absence of penalty and its occasion. To secure this, penalty rebukes that which thwarts it. Life is the avoidance of all that is deadly. Health is the answer to the absence of all that makes sick. Pathology is in order to cure. The absence of all negations fulfills the positive purpose. Therefore we have and study these alien symptoms. We "*mind true things by what their mockeries be.*"

Truly, to fear penalty for its own sake is not goodness. Avowedly its law is for offenders. Its intent is to signify that law is to be kept, *not* broken. It is, in whatever degree, admonitory—"lest a worse thing befall," but it is admonitory because it is stringently in earnest. The first symptoms have all the incidental values of intimidation—they say "*go back*"—the last results are

fatal and vindicate the law—of use and help only toward others who heed and pause. All is forewarned that all the bearings may be understood. Therefore said Paul, "Knowing the terrors of law, we persuade." Terror is not persuasion, but it prompts to it. God is not mocked; therefore mock him not! "Because there *is* wrath—*beware!*"

By every quicksand there is a sign,—at every critical point a signal,—before every trespass a fence. Those only are angry at this who mean to take the chances. When God does not neglect, be sure He does not exaggerate.

Penalty alone is not recuperative, but points inward to the need of recuperation. It is introductory—preliminary. It points away from itself to far deeper and higher considerations. It designates evil and urges that "the fear of the Lord is to hate" *that*. The way of the transgressor is made hard that so he may quit transgression. He is made to fear the bad that he may have its unreasonableness shown, and may have his ears opened to discipline; so he can come to see further, and to distinguish mere legal fear from godly sorrow for the *wrong*. The fitness of law thus appeals to the inner and moral sanctions. The case is carried up into the court of con-

science. The terrors of the *Lord*, against whom all sin is, lift him above the mere questions of advantage. He seeks not escape, but remedy; not mere remission of pain, but forgiveness of *sin*. He sees that penalty has been benign—in leading through, and out of, legal fear. The inwardness of evil appears. He fronts Duty, and can see the bewildering beauty of the love that provides a righteous amnesty. Nothing artificial can equal that. Before its sunlight even the electric pencils cast a shadow. There is "forgiveness with God that he should be feared." They are but practical fatalists who trifle with mercy by evading the obedience to which mercy means to reclaim. That is not a salvation which does not save from sin. The persuasions of God are in order that we may see the sacredness of life as bound up in Him. Goodness is "not of necessity but of free will." Probation discloses sufficient light to certify sin's wages, but not enough to stun and sear. Fear of results leads back to the vision of the false relation which invokes them. It awakens and summons, it arrests and indicts, but its ends are fulfilled only in a changed mind and a contrite heart. Pardon is given only to those who ask it as their sole resource, and who ask it that they may become clean and true. Love to a holy

God is the only fulfillment of that law which the gospel emphasizes and meets, not evades. Oh, may we all meet this persuasion with surrender, and, held fast in the arms of mercy, be able to say with penitent and devoted, and so with assured hearts: "Enter not into judgment with thy servant!"

VIII

THE INVISIBLE COMPANION

VIII

THE INVISIBLE COMPANION

"It is expedient for you that I go away."—JOHN xvi. 7.

THE anticipation of the Ascension, and the prelude of Christ's further and ever-crescent revelation of God!

His eleven intimate friends knew that a catastrophe was nearing them. What it was to be they could not tell, but they felt its chilling breath, and they perceived that it menaced that society with Him which had become so vital and so precious.

Sorrow filled their hearts, and as frightened children clutch a mother's skirts, so with a painful instinct they held that Friend and Teacher whose presence and love had grown to be their whole life. They were troubled too deeply to reason well upon the purpose and way of His going; they only longed not to lose Him, and clung to Him with a suffocating premonition.

Not directly does He chide their distress, but He corrects its degree, and would soothe the sore

hearts whose anxious grief is His grief also. Never does He censure the tears that blind affectionate eyes, but wipes them from all faces with His own soft hand.

When can He better than now assure them that He will not bereave them,—that His departure will "not leave them orphans,"—that, in the person of another Helper, who shall more and more show them of Himself, He will come to them to "abide with them for ever." This soon, and that by and by He their Lord will return to receive them again, and to part from them no more.

These things He had not told them earlier; for it was not needful while He still was with them, but now He plants in their hearts a great hope, preparing them to recognize and welcome the Holy Ghost as His personal and continued presence. The Paraclete is Christ's perdurable life.

One more token here that the fondest and firmest promises are made in the hours of intensest need,—in wrecked Eden that earliest gospel of the seed of the woman that should crush the serpent's head,—before impending Calvary this pledge, "Lo, I am with you alway." Every keen pang of love that suffers and trusts is big with revelation—its travail contains an overwhelming joy.

The consolations of God bestow new interpretations of His nature and of its nearness, and arouse an expectancy which shall be fulfilled. And when all else is dark, to cite this constancy of God is the best that human lips can minister to human distress.

So their Friend (and He is ours) declares to them that though their misery is natural, it is unnecessary. They must have confidence in *Him*, —"If it were not so, I would have told you"! And to that confidence in His absolute knowledge and fidelity—His personal trustworthiness (and this is the very quintessence and marrow of "faith"—not opinion, or mental conclusion, but the intuition of a person)—to this confidence He appeals, with a reason so deep that they shall always ponder it and wonder, as we, too, wonder at its wealth: "It is expedient for you that I go away." "Nevertheless"—always the more! Incomprehensible: yet strange as it seems He pledges His truthfulness that His apparent going is to be His coming nearer to them than ever! His plan, and right, and glory is also to be their great gain.

They are to accept this now because *He* says so,—later they are to realize it. They are to enter upon a new era and a riper experience of

God. Their fellowship so far is introductory to a richer bestowal of His nature and a more abundant manifestation of His life. As, far into that last night, their Friend talked on with them, He told them more than all else He had told them; but He is, by that imparted Guest for whose welcome he makes ready, to tell them more yet—to enlighten their remembrance and ever to intensify their hopes. Their Teacher is to draw them to loftier vision and to closer intimacy. All they had received and learned so far is but prelude. Power lay in the promise: "Greater things than these shall he do; *because* I go unto the Father." "If I go not away, the Paraclete will not come." Thus does Christ affirm Himself the connection between the outmost and the inmost, the God above and God within the soul, and lays His hand upon both.

God shows His love, both in the course of time and in the progress of each recovered heart, in three consecutive and completing manifestations. They are climactic: Creation, Incarnation, Inspiration. The universe about and above, the animate body with and before us, the deep soul within,—these are His vessels of revelation, affirming His power, His personality, and His unseen presence. Reason, sense, and intuition answer Him,—Maker,

Kinsman, and Companion,—and in all, the Lord and Lover.

That is most which is inmost, including and crowning all else and leading reflection through feeling into direct vital certainty. This is the order of our apprehension of God, the objective evidence leading on and into the subjective. And the strongest is latest in order. Taking ourselves with us at every step, and led by Him who is the beginning and the end, we climb the stairway of experience and fact up to the primary conviction that "in Him we live"—began to live and live now. First we infer, next we perceive, last we *know*.

And it was unto the filling of this highest knowledge—essence to essence, spirit to spirit—that Christ went away. Sight was to be surpassed by insight. The sentient soul was to transcend the senses.

So Paul said "even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more"; for He who once dwelt with His disciples now dwells in them. "The Lord is that Spirit"—inhabiting the soul He saves. To realize this dispenses with all sentimental longing for His form. How the emotions of the world would stir were it proclaimed that the Son of God were

again in the flesh, working again as He wrought at Capernaum and Bethany, talking to this gray and haggard age as He talked in those first years of the era He created! How it would sift the hearts of men! But that such an excitement would thrill the nations and create an international crisis would be, first, because He is here now and has been always, and second, because so many do not know it or have forgotten!

He showed Himself then, long ago, *because* His power was to remain. He taught His apostles more after His ascension than they had conceived before. There is no fading out and anticlimax in the written word. He presides in it all. The Old Testament is to be reread in the light of the New, and the great epistles "have the mind of Christ" not merely in comment but in amplification. They deepen, protract, and fulfill the narrative of the Evangels. Peter and John and Paul unfold the meanings—so universal and age-long—of redemption with a ken and grasp which only progress under its central Person could have given them. He taught them to the last, and questions and implications which the gospel raised their after-record answers. Nay, after them and ever since, in a sequence and enlargement that knows no break or period, the company of

those who by the Spirit call Jesus Lord, is the integral proof of His unintermittent and for ever culminating power. The Viewless One is the constantly executive Saviour of the world. This secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and He will show them His covenant.

Now surely we can see some of the eminent blessings which were established by the withdrawal of Christ from sight and all external sense. They are for us also. First, it deepened the apprehension of His real nature and effect. The open vision gave confidence in God an immensely definite basis, but this was also the foundation upon which fidelity was yet to enlarge. It was not a conclusion, but the beginning of a wider knowledge of the real God ever immanent in the life of the world. The corner stone was set fast, but the temple was to rise. The King was come that the kingdom of His truth might prove His reign and endless increase of government.

Principle was to surpass rule, and companionships of soul supersede physical proximity; for intuition is more than inspection, and the local is swallowed up of the universal. Much as these disciples desired His continued tangible form and His audible word, they were to learn Him better by His apparent absence, following Him rather

than their sight of Him, and finding omnipresence more than ubiquity.

The experience which is not merely objective, nor even rational alone, but moral, is the highest discipline and the most direct and consummate assurance. The strongest evidence is in the spirit—this candle Christ lights—and so, however impossible seemed this announcement, they were to comprehend more of their Lord and of His resources and intention by that which then seemed (only seemed) to throw them upon themselves.

Further, they were to profit in proving the superiority of general over special manifestations. The phenomenal is everywhere the limited and the transitory, the invisible endures and creates new incarnations. The "law of the Spirit of life" transcends the particular effect and instance. Biology lies back of morphology. The spiritual force is the fact, and the given form is but its incident.

We realize by our departures. The boy never knows how much and whereunto his mother did for him until he is gone from home. The wonderful deed fills and dazzles the horizon,—afterwards its meaning, its implication toward and interpretation of the accustomed, translates it, while it reillumines what for a little while it hid.

The call or whisper of God in the soul is the generic and normal thing. Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit. The silent communion is the closest and the surest. And this constant utterance within to those who seek the Presence in their hearts is the permanent truth which Christ came to teach, and went away that He might teach it the more. Herein at least the Quakers have borne a pregnant testimony. The general is more than the special, and they misunderstand and neglect God who now would turn back to demand a sign. The vacuity of "spiritism" is that it reverts to the senses and foregoes spirituality. At the best it doubts the Holy Ghost, and so is "by its means defeated of its ends." It substitutes curiosity for communion.

Moreover, Christ's departure devolved upon His disciples larger responsibilities. They were to learn initiative and resolution. Always so. Ability grows thereby and certainty. A father teaches his child the moves of chess, and then, though seeing how many plays might be bettered, he is silent and watches, so that the child may learn the game even by losing games. Coaching is provisional. It does its work by making ready to retire. Our best books are those we have mastered. A college is in order that its students

may cease to be undergraduates. It is applied that it may educe the after man. There is no influence that we appreciate while we are absorbing it, but only when it proves itself by flowing from us. Its reflex is its fulfillment.

Christ's going was the promotion of those men of His, thereafter to do what He had done. Pupils are to become teachers—disciples to be apostles. They are to reveal His life in their mortal bodies. A world is put upon their hands, while they and it still are on His heart. They have a testimony to give, nourished all the while in their souls by Him who commissions them.

How wonderfully and how fast they grew! The Peter of that night could shame all that external knowledge had done for him, but not after Pentecost. The Unseen was to rouse a deeper faith than sight had ever conferred. And to the last—a new beatitude, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." He who was there, is here!

How evidently Christ, who knew when to come, knew when to go! The work of incarnation was done, inspiration was established once for all. Their Lord's fidelity challenges theirs, as His representatives. Reasserting the permanent proximity of God, the task was finished.

All work is best done by making it ready to transfer, by putting into it a spirit that shall survive one's physical presence and that shall inspire others to maintain and advance it. He imparted what could not but endure. Christ's legacy was His changed but deepened companionship. Had He lived on in Galilee, to be known only as He might be seen, all the millions of men who know Him now had been the losers.

His more "expedient" way is His way toward and for us. Perhaps you think that to see Him with your mortal eyes would make you sure, and that His visible lips would answer your complex questions, His palpable hands lighten so many burdens; but the immortal eyes are surer, the inner voice more intimate, the help more immediate. He chose for those disciples the wider, fuller, completer manifestation, giving not as the world gives, and His Good-by was not a parting after all. He is not gone!

We whisper that child's hymn:—

> "I wish that His hands had been laid on my head,
> That His arms had been thrown around me,
> And that I might have seen His kind looks,"

but "Abide with me" is a nobler aspiration.

Meeting Him now in the daily inmost life, all

things but hasten the day wherein we shall have that whose postponement is our best probation. "A little while" and you shall see Him as He is, then also to add your rapturous Amen to that which, when it was given, was so inconceivably great a promise, and to say and fully know—"It was expedient that He went away."

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